

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION AND SAFETY BOARD

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In the matter of: :
: :
THE INVESTIGATION OF THE :
CAPSIZING OF THE WATER TAXI : Docket No:
LADY D IN BALTIMORE HARBOR, : DCA04MM015
MARYLAND :
ON MARCH 6, 2004 :
: :
INTERVIEW OF: :
: :
CHIEF MELVIN LEE JOHNSON :
NAVAL RESERVE CENTER :
: :
- - - - -x

NTSB
Office of Marine Safety
MS-10
490 L'Enfant Plaza East SW
Washington, DC 20594
Monday, March 8, 2004

The above captioned interview convened.

BEFORE:

W. R. Woody
National Transportation Safety Board

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MR. WOODY: Say that again.

3 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: I'm Melvin Lee
4 Johnson.

5 MR. WOODY: Okay, and what is your duty here
6 at the reserve center?

7 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: I'm the Command Master
8 Chief.

9 MR. WOODY: Can you tell me what that
10 position involves?

11 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: That is the senior
12 enlisted advisor to the command.

13 MR. WOODY: And I see that your rank is SKCM?

14 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Right, that's Master
15 Chief Store Keeper.

16 MR. WOODY: And you've had active duty in the
17 Navy, have you not?

18 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Yes, I have.

19 MR. WOODY: And how many years of active duty
20 did you have?

21 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: It's about six to
22 eight years of active duty.

23 MR. WOODY: Okay, and how many years of
24 reserve time?

25 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Well, if you put that
26 together, it will be a total of 42 years this August
27 first.

1 MR. WOODY: Six to eight years plus
2 reserves?

3 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Right.

4 MR. WOODY: Equals -

5 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Forty-two years.

6 MR. WOODY: Forty-two years. Tell us about
7 the day that the accident happened. What you remember
8 - what time was it and what were you doing and where
9 you were at, and -

10 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Okay, between quarter
11 of and ten of four, Chief Scardina and myself were at
12 the back of the reserve center, out of the doorway.
13 And we were just out there talking about the storm, the
14 approaching storm and looking at the weather conditions
15 because we heard loud thunder earlier and a gust of
16 wind seemed to be coming on and we were trying to
17 figure out what the weather patterns were going to be.

18 While we were out there we noticed, out in
19 the channel beyond where the red marker buoy, that we
20 saw there was a water taxi going in the direction of
21 Fort McHenry. But even though, you know, they were all
22 the way over on the other side of the channel alongside
23 a large green marine vessel that was tied up, when we
24 saw a large - looked like a large wall of water - when
25 I say that, I mean a combination of rain and wind, the
26 water was very choppy and turbulent and it had a swift
27 current going out towards the Fort.

1 And when I saw the pontoon boat, I said to
2 Chief Scardina, what is he doing out here in this kind
3 of weather? Somebody had to have a marine warning or
4 something. And it looked like he was about to make a
5 left turn and it looked like he was trying to turn
6 around and go back up into the inner harbor or at least
7 make a left hand turn and that's when we noticed that
8 when he turned into the wind it seemed like the wind
9 lifted the pontoon - one side of the pontoon boat out
10 of the water, and before it could come back down, it
11 seemed like another gust took it and flipped it over
12 and it capsized.

13 MR. WOODY: And you say it capsized to which
14 side?

15 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: My recollection is
16 that it capsized to the right side.

17 MR. WOODY: The right side. How quick was
18 the capsizing?

19 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: As soon as the wind
20 picked it up, I'd say it was less than 30 seconds. It
21 seemed to be less than 30 seconds. Less than half a
22 minute.

23 MR. WOODY: Just take this like this here, if
24 this is raised up one time - raised up - were you
25 looking at this sideways?

26 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: At the back. In other
27 words, I'm looking at this at the back of the boat. So

1 when he started to negotiate the turn like this, just
2 as he got to this point, it seemed like it lifted it up
3 like this. They never got a chance to settle back
4 down.

5 MR. WOODY: So that's probably just a few
6 seconds?

7 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Right. So, I mean,
8 from the time we saw him making the turn to when he
9 flipped was about half a minute, by the time he made
10 the turn to the time it flipped, it seemed to be about
11 that.

12 MR. WOODY: Okay, from the time it raised up
13 and then raised up again it was just seconds right?

14 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Seconds, right.

15 MR. WOODY: One or two seconds. Now, was
16 there any kind of ship in the background?

17 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Yes, there was a large
18 green vessel, looked like a - could have been a tanker
19 or some type of large - it was green on the side,
20 looked like some sort of tanker.

21 MR. WOODY: Now, as you looked at the tanker,
22 did it actually happen, say, within the length of the
23 tanker, or was it one side or the other of the tanker?

24 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Well the tanker,
25 looked like it was tied up to port side, so what we saw
26 was the starboard side of it.

27 MR. WOODY: You saw the starboard side of the
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1 tanker.

2 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Right.

3 MR. WOODY: Okay.

4 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: And from the time he
5 passed that red channel marker and just before he got
6 to the green channel marker, because I noticed he was
7 about at the bow of this ship, near the anchor, when he
8 made that turn. And then that's when the pontoon was
9 raised up due to water or wind, or a combination of
10 both that caused it to raise up there and whew, I said
11 he's not going to make it.

12 And from there on, I tell you, Senior Chief
13 called 911 on his cell phone and I went in to the
14 building also to call 911 to insure that if he couldn't
15 have gotten through. And right after we did that I
16 gave all the information, where we were, where you're
17 located, and they said you want fire, ambulance - I
18 said anything, including marine police, whatever you've
19 got out there, we've got a boat out in the middle of
20 the channel and it just overturned, a water taxi. And
21 she got the information.

22 I went back out to the door. By this time,
23 the people on the second floor who were watching out
24 the window had started coming down the stairs.
25 Everyone started running out. Some of the active duty
26 staff and the reservists. The folks that are used to
27 being with the boat, they started donning life jackets,

1 and everyone followed. No one had to ask anyone to do
2 anything or say you need to provide. Because we are
3 not in the rescue business but there were people out
4 there that you had transferable skills. The bosun
5 mates, quartermasters or whatever, and everyone started
6 to get on to the boat and to untie it to get underway.

7 At that time, when we started to get
8 underway, we noticed the fireboat also started to get
9 underway. They both met us there about the same time.
10 We left in such a hurry that no one thought about
11 taking the walkie-talkie we use for the boat, so the
12 only communications was my cell phone and the cell
13 phone in Chief Duncan's that was on the boat at that
14 time.

15 As they went out, it seemed like the boat -
16 everything started shifting because of the current,
17 everything started moving fast or down towards the Fort
18 and that's when I saw the mike boat go out there and
19 try to -

20 MR. WOODY: The mike boat?

21 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: The mike boat. That's
22 the landing craft out there, ACU27.

23 MR. WOODY: Okay, you call it mike, LCM?

24 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: We call it mike boat.
25 You've got it. The LCM27, that was the one, and even
26 that, when they got there, they said you know, that -
27 (knock on wood) because we heard the engines started

1 which was a miracle, because usually those things
2 don't start right away. And they had life jackets on,
3 and we ... lines and towing everything out there, so they
4 all went out there.

5 After that period of time they got a little
6 bit out of sight as far as the actual personnel down in
7 the boat and so forth, so we kept in contact through a
8 cell phone of what was going on. And everything was
9 down past the green marker buoy now, as far what they
10 were doing with the boats and all. I did see, however,
11 from the ramps go down and it looks like they tried to
12 lift that part of the pontoon boat. Later on I was
13 told that they did that because they wanted to see if
14 anyone was underneath, and then they did lift it up and
15 they found some people trapped underneath, and that's
16 when I understood that some of the personnel had gone
17 down waist-deep on the bow ramp and a couple personnel
18 jumped over under there trying to see who was stuck
19 under there. There were some people still under there
20 and they tried to extricate them at that time.

21 Through a process of things that went on with
22 the fire boat and our boat, Chief Duncan again kept in
23 touch with me and said, hey, listen, looks we are going
24 to be coming back to bring - we are taking on
25 survivors, we are going to bring them back. And I
26 said, "Where are you bringing them to?"

27 "We are going to bring them back to the pier

1 we left."

2 Technically, that was a wise decision because
3 we were the only craft out there that had a capacity to
4 take that amount of people. We were sturdy enough to
5 take the bouncing of the waves and so forth and we've
6 got experienced people on the boat as far as engineers
7 and other people that have a sense of what is going on
8 to lend a hand.

9 When they told me that, I immediately came
10 back and started coordinating the services of clearing
11 the pier, getting the triage set up, getting our mess
12 deck tables ..

13 MR. WOODY: Oh, really?

14 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Yes, they now take
15 over the yard and we just moved them into certain
16 positions. The hospital corpsman came in and got
17 blankets and got any --

18 MR. WOODY: He "came in." Was he at home or
19 - the hospital corpsman?

20 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: No, they were here.
21 They were on duty.

22 MR. WOODY: You said they came in.

23 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Both of them, the
24 female, HMS Scott Wilson, HM2 Spiegel, the hospital
25 corpsmen. They started coming down with any medical
26 supplies they had. We broke out one or two of the old
27 stokes stretchers that we had. And we waited for them

1 to come in as they were setting up there. We made
2 coffee.

3 When the boat did arrive and come in to the
4 pier, everyone who was not involved cleared the pier.
5 Clear the pier. Didn't need bystanders following also.
6 At that time we started bringing the people off the
7 boat, and some of our guys were coming off the boat.
8 Looked like some of them had been really touched by
9 what was out there. So ... and reflecting, we still had
10 a job to do, so I had to move these people in and out
11 of there.

12 We also had Sea Cadets that were drilling
13 that day. These are young folks and we wanted to get
14 them out of the way because as you start observing some
15 of the people in trauma as they were being put up on
16 the tables, we were trying to clear the deck of
17 everyone else. Everyone was very professional because
18 the trauma was on one side and the rescuers were on the
19 other side of the hull. And basically after that, we
20 just tried to coordinate the services, make sure
21 everything happened.

22 MR. WOODY: How many people at a time did you
23 have in the area here in the center? How many rescued
24 people did you -

25 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Well, we had about -
26 I'd say about 17. Seventeen, maybe 20 - but maybe 17
27 people from went there on that boat.

1 MR. WOODY: Seventeen went out there?

2 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Right.

3 MR. WOODY: But the people that you brought
4 in, the people that you rescued? How many of those did
5 you have in at one time?

6 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: If I remember ... it was
7 17 or 18 of them.

8 MR. WOODY: Seventeen or 18 of them.

9 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: I think it was 17. I
10 know it was a total of 25 all together, I think we -

11 MR. WOODY: Did any of them have any serious
12 health problems?

13 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Some of them were -
14 they were doing resuscitation on one or two of them.

15 MR. WOODY: Is that right?

16 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: And some of the people
17 had wounds in which they were being cleaned and
18 wrapped. Because see, by that time we had some of the
19 EMS people here. We had a couple people, reservists,
20 who are EMTs - there's definitely one fellow, he's a ...,
21 he's in a volunteer fire company. So we did have
22 people, professionals, who knew. That's why we had our
23 people standing here. Let them take the lead - we
24 didn't have any doctors or nurses that we know of that
25 were there at that time. So EMS was in here from the
26 city and we had police also, but our guys filled in and
27 helped.

1 The crew had brought out T-shirts that they
2 had, we brought all the blankets we had. We loaded
3 them with some electrical heaters on the deck to
4 provide heat. The coffee was on. We had shower
5 facilities, if anyone needed it, but basically that's
6 what they were doing - all together on that drill deck,
7 everyone in our compound - fire, police, medics, you
8 know, so - there had to be at least, I'd say between 25
9 or 30 people involved in it - triage and moving back
10 and forth.

11 MR. WOODY: How many - you had a figure of
12 roughly 17 as well of station folks here, Navy people,
13 and then how many - how many outsiders would there have
14 been.

15 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Well, basically, the
16 people that came off the boat, about 17 of them I
17 estimated, people that were on the boat as rescuers -

18 MR. WOODY: Yes.

19 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: -- and were giving
20 assistance - those came in. Some of them went inside
21 to change their clothes, the others ones on the other
22 side of the drill deck were standing by, just standing
23 by, observing and I guess being there as support for
24 each other. Like I said, a few of them were shaken up.

25 MR. WOODY: And you had some EMTs that were
26 reservists?

27 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Right.

1 MR. WOODY: Okay, see I - some of the EMTs
2 were reservists.

3 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Exactly.

4 MR. WOODY: Okay, that's why I'm -

5 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Right. Right. One
6 gentleman, I understand, was a diver. He was one of
7 the officers with the Sea Cadets, so he wasn't actually
8 a reservist here. He was working with the Sea Cadets,
9 but I understand he was a diver, or he's had diving
10 experience. We did have some people with different
11 professions to assist in there. And people who knew
12 CPR, that were able to help.

13 MR. WOODY: I had a note about CPR.

14 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: I understand they were
15 trying to perform some on the boat on some of the
16 people on their way in.

17 MR. WOODY: The CPR - was it on three or two
18 or -

19 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: That had the function
20 -

21 MR. WOODY: Yes, in the building.

22 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Not the people that
23 were performing out there, but the people in here?

24 MR. WOODY: No, the people performing
25 anywhere in the building.

26 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Okay, and I'm just
27 saying there were some people performing CPR on the

1 boat.

2 MR. WOODY: Yes, I know. I mean here in the
3 building?

4 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: In the building we had
5 at least - we had at least - at least a good five or
6 six people that knew CPR that were out there.

7 MR. WOODY: Okay, these are people who knew
8 CPR - they were involved. How many people were they
9 giving CPR to?

10 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Well, there should
11 have been at least two.

12 MR. WOODY: Two.

13 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: There should have been
14 at least two.

15 MR. WOODY: Okay.

16 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: For the CPR part of
17 it, trying to resuscitate them, and they were moved on
18 to the ambulance and taken out of here.

19 MR. WOODY: So five or six maybe were
20 involved, and they were giving CPR to at least two -

21 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Right.

22 MR. WOODY: -- two or more.

23 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Right.

24 MR. WOODY: When the boat was underway - I
25 think I asked this before, but I'd like to ask it on
26 the record here, was there any kind of announcement
27 made by anybody?

1 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: When our boat got
2 underway?

3 MR. WOODY: Yes.

4 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: No.

5 MR. WOODY: Was there any kind of - like a
6 rescue boat would ring a bell?

7 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: No, no we don't have a
8 rescue boat crew. That's not one of our functions.

9 MR. WOODY: You don't have an emergency boat
10 crew?

11 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: No, sir. No rescue
12 boat crew. We're not trained in rescue operations.
13 We're basically trained in boat safety operations and
14 transporting, landing, and extracting troops when we're
15 under normal exercises. No, this is -

16 MR. WOODY: This is -

17 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Exactly, this was
18 something that was not scripted - there was no script
19 for this.

20 MR. WOODY: No script? Okay, that's a very
21 important - improvise.

22 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Right, people started
23 - no one had to pass the word. We don't have a duty
24 party. The group that usually handles the boat just
25 wasn't their weekend to drill. And there were no
26 drills actually scheduled for the boat to go out.
27 Everybody was taking training inside at one point or

1 another. So everyone just fell in and they followed
2 the lead and they took over. And that's what made me
3 so proud of them. Not a word was said - it was almost
4 like a Marcel Marceau - everything was pantomime.
5 Someone reached for something, someone gave it to them.
6 Someone looked, someone followed. That's what it was.

7 MR. WOODY: That's an incredible story, isn't
8 it?

9 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: It is. It is. I saw
10 it, and even while they were doing that, the people
11 were setting for triage were doing their thing. Going
12 to get things, the supplies. We didn't have to ask for
13 anything. People automatically went and did what they
14 needed, and it all came together.

15 MR. WOODY: Well, somewhere back in the past,
16 there was some training for that, wasn't there?

17 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Yes, there was.

18 MR. WOODY: It's all training ...

19 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Exactly. And the
20 compassion shown -

21 MR. WOODY: That's a credit to the Navy and
22 the training and the people, you know.

23 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Yes, and also, got to
24 think about this. The command climate, because you
25 have people from various cultures, backgrounds, and
26 disciplines, to get everyone to come together, it shows
27 the caring for another fellow human being without

1 regard for their own selves. Has a lot to say about
2 family, the family - I keep using that term, family,
3 because even the EMTs and the police, I told them, I
4 say -

5 All right. My main concern during that time
6 with the fire and police rescue was do you have a
7 chaplain - do you have a chaplain? You need a chaplain
8 in here. Because I saw by the expression of some of
9 folks coming off the boat that they weren't taking it
10 well, and one of the members had had a tragedy with a
11 younger brother in many earlier years, in which I think
12 he witnessed a brother drown, you know, at least that's
13 the way the story goes. So I was concerned about their
14 mental health and their well being. That's why there's
15 a chaplain - by the time they were able to get a
16 chaplain it was late in the evening in which it was -
17 you know, it was after drill hours, and what the
18 corpsman did - what he did is he got two vans to take
19 all the people in the boat over to Bethesda Naval
20 Hospital. HM1 Scott Wilson made a call over there and
21 told them, listen, we need to set up something, we've
22 got an emergency situation here, because usually most
23 military hospitals you go into, you have to wait there
24 a while, and what I understand, Bethesda was set up and
25 ready to go. So when the two vans of people came over
26 there, they started doing the evaluation and
27 observation of these people. They kept some of them

1 for a while, but by the end of the night all of them
2 were released, given either medication or directions
3 that they needed, and a lot of them came back.

4 I was still in the process of - the American
5 Red Cross was here and the ... to request the crisis team
6 be sent ASAP. I had made that outcry to a couple of
7 people. They contacted me and said, what do you need?
8 How many do you need? So I said I've got about 20 or
9 30 people, some were actually involved in it, some were
10 bystanders. And I was asked, what do you mean by
11 bystanders, and I had to tell them exactly what I mean,
12 that they weren't exactly involved, but witnessed the
13 trauma people were going through.

14 I was told that next day that I would have
15 what I needed. They sent a couple women, a couple men
16 out too, and I said I need them at 6:30 in the morning,
17 because our reservists start coming back at seven, and
18 the news media may be coming down and I need those
19 people ASAP. Because I didn't - I wanted to catch
20 them while they were still in their state of being.

21 They came in. We had one set of five. We
22 got everybody together and sent them in there for
23 debriefing. One of the ladies was a pediatric
24 specialist in her area of debriefing. That was good
25 because Senior Chief Scardina's son had witnessed a lot
26 of this and I could see Senior Chief was shaken and I
27 could see that his son basically did not understand

1 what was going on, and I -

2 MR. WOODY: How old is his son?

3 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: His son - I think his
4 son's about twelve.

5 MR. WOODY: About twelve?

6 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Yes, and I said make
7 sure that both of you get in there. And the people did
8 go in there and got support. Our government - also got
9 a call early that morning from the state - they wanted
10 to send an intervention team. I said, I've already got
11 one coming, thanks so much for everything.

12 MR. WOODY: Do you remember when the crisis
13 team came?

14 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Six-thirty Sunday
15 morning, which - they were here at six-thirty and we
16 set up the room so in case somebody needed to do a
17 one-on-one, they could do it.

18 MR. WOODY: Okay.

19 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: But just by asking the
20 day before, the chaplain left me his card, if we need
21 him to call him back, but technically, due to
22 coordination, I was able to get some commitments early
23 in the game. Because see, they only drill ... on
24 Sunday, so I had to have them in here first thing
25 Sunday morning.

26 MR. WOODY: Did you call them Saturday night
27 late?

1 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Yes, I called them -
2 eight - well, once we finished, I started - I asked the
3 people who were here, to be - we - I held the center
4 open 24 hours. I told the CO I was going to keep the
5 center open. He said well, why are we doing that? I
6 said, CO, we're in a support mode for the total
7 community. And you've got to realize that if we leave
8 now, it's like well, the Navy got what it wanted so it
9 closed the shop. I didn't want that appearance. I
10 told everyone about that, well, we're all family now,
11 so I will keep the place open. I'm going to spend the
12 night. I'll have two more people with me. And that
13 was my main concern that everybody was able to carry
14 out their mission with full cooperation.

15 MR. WOODY: The team - the crisis team - you
16 started talking about who they were and specialties.
17 How many people all together?

18 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: There were two females
19 and one, two, three, four males - so about six of them.

20 MR. WOODY: And you mentioned one was
21 actually a -

22 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: One of the females,
23 her specialty -

24 MR. WOODY: Trauma involving children.

25 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Right. And she asked
26 me, she said, "What do you mean by child? Give me an
27 age."

1 I said, "Twelve."

2 MR. WOODY: So did she talk to your chief's
3 son?

4 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Yes. She did, yes.
5 But I - you know, I think he went in there with him
6 first to maybe talk to both of them, and then maybe
7 they talked to him alone, I don't know. They had him
8 off to the side. I set up three different rooms, so in
9 case people had to do a one-on-one, they could do it.

10 MR. WOODY: And generally, what other
11 specialties did they have, if you know? Was there a
12 chaplain?

13 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: I don't - well, this
14 was a ... and I'm not sure if one of them was a chaplain
15 or not, but most of them were the mental health team.
16 Most of them - from the local fire department. And I
17 think - I had been asked the day before, why don't -
18 you know, we're going to get somebody from family
19 services in Annapolis, because that's the Navy's arm,
20 but because of the time for communication for them, I
21 wanted to take the quickest action we had, so that's
22 why we went through the fire department. I went for
23 it.

24 MR. WOODY: Pretty fantastic. That's very
25 good. And they arrived there the next morning at 6:30.

26 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Right, they asked me
27 what time do you need us there? I said, 6:30.

1 MR. WOODY: And you calling everybody then
2 about what time? About nine o'clock or eight o'clock?

3 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: You mean that evening?

4 MR. WOODY: Uh-huh (yes.)

5 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Yes, it could have
6 even been later than that because, like I said, I was
7 here all night, so it could have been about that time.
8 I had four staff members who left close to 10:30,
9 eleven o'clock, and the CO called me back and said, you
10 know, "Who's still there?" I'm ... all night. I said,
11 well, I'm putting everybody out, myself and Chief
12 Scardina will be here. But I - when he had took his
13 son home, he came back, I sent him back home. I said,
14 listen, I'm closing the shop on everybody. You need to
15 go home. You really need to be with your son.

16 He said, "Well, he's asleep."

17 I said, yes, but you just need to go home.
18 Because I knew what the situation was. Technically, he
19 didn't want to be alone. I understand that, but also I
20 had to understand my own self worth and I may not be
21 able to meet his needs, and I may kind of weaken
22 myself, so I won't be effective if I'm completely drawn
23 off, so I said you need to go home. I needed to have
24 some solitude also during that time. And - but
25 realizing that, I sent him home. Locked the door.

26 Only thing is, my corpsman, he came back. He
27 came back.

1 MR. WOODY: He came back?

2 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: He came back after I
3 locked the door. I said what are you doing here? Why
4 aren't you home with your family?

5 He said, well, the kid and the wife are
6 asleep and so forth, and so I guess he had gone off for
7 a little while and come back. So I said, oh, oh, I'm
8 not going to get to sleep tonight. And it was about
9 two, 2:30 in the morning when he came back. I said,
10 Doc, what are you doing here? He said, well, you know,
11 they're asleep so I thought I'd come back.

12 And Doc started talking some more, and I
13 said, oops, I'm being pulled into this one, and I've
14 got to do this self-preservation. I said, "Look, Doc,
15 I'm going to go take a shower, why don't you go and
16 stretch out." "Okay, Master Chief."

17 I took my shower. I laid down about 3:30 and
18 got back up at five. So I had to preserve myself. I
19 wanted to help him, but I had to help myself first. I
20 had to ... because I knew I was going to have another
21 full day to go through.

22 MR. WOODY: And how long was the crisis team
23 on board?

24 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: They were on board all
25 day.

26 MR. WOODY: All day?

27 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: They said we'll be

1 here as long as you need us. They were all day,
2 walking around, looking - they wanted to follow people.
3 One guy had got up from the meeting and walked out, and
4 they wanted to follow him and make sure he was okay.
5 But they were here as long as we needed them.

6 And they're going to do a follow-up the 17th,
7 18th of April during the next tour. One of the
8 recruiters, he didn't come in that day, so I made -
9 well, he came in this morning, I made the services
10 available to him. I said you'll be able to -- you
11 know, if you need to talk. His wife's a nurse,
12 actually, I don't know ... we have the services here and
13 was welcome to come back on the 17th and 18th of April
14 if you need anything. ... pretty good idea.

15 MR. WOODY: Well, I think - I was going to
16 ask you a last question ... because that's very
17 interesting.

18 MASTER CHIEF JOHNSON: Well, you know, the
19 only thing I think, I would say in closing is several
20 reporters had asked several questions. I think one of
21 them was, you know, are those guys being given a day
22 off? And that's a loaded question. And I'm saying,
23 this is where the weekend starts. These guys want to
24 come back. They feel this is family. They want to
25 come in. I'm not going to deny that. They want to
26 come in. They had a shared experience, and I'm not
27 going to tell them they can't come back.

1 And the last question was, "Well you know,
2 you guys are considered heroes. How does everyone feel
3 about that?"

4 And I said, you know, we're not heroes.
5 We're humanitarians. We saw a need and we filled it.
6 We saw suffering and we tried to relieve it. And, you
7 know, I said, we care. And that was it in a nutshell.

8 And I think the only thing that threw me off,
9 one question, what kind of condition were your people
10 in when they came back? And I said, well, they had a
11 show of concern in their face for the survivors and
12 also their fellow crewmen. That was it. No more
13 questions right now.

14 I hope that's been of some help to you.

15 MR. WOODY: Yes, this has been a great
16 experience. And we are done.

17 (Whereupon, the interview in the above
18 captioned matter was concluded.)